AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A system for managing work orders using priorities, comprising:

a work-order entry computer for entering a plurality of work-orders;

a database management system coupled to the work-order entry computer for storing work-order information related to the plurality of work orders;

a work order management computer;

a time estimation process executing on the work order management computer for assigning a time estimate to each work order entered , the time estimate corresponding to the time estimated to be required to complete the work order;

a priority assigning process executing on the work order management computer which a user can use to assign a priority to at least one of the plurality of entered work orders, the priority assigning process allocating to each engineer a pre-determined number of priorities for a pre-determined number of priority levels;

the priority assigning process tracking a remaining number of priorities at each priority level for each engineer, and when the remaining number of priorities for a particular priority level is zero, then the priority assigning process not permitting an engineer to assign another work order to that particular priority level;

the priority assigning process permitting the engineer to borrow priorities from other engineers, wherein when the engineer has no remaining priorities in that particular priority level, then the priority assigning process permits the engineer to negotiate with the other engineers to borrow a priority in that particular priority level, the priority assigning process querying to determine whether another engineer may loan a priority; and

a graphical user interface executing on the work order management computer in which a user can update at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system.

2. (Original) The system recited in claim 1, wherein the priority assigning processes tracks priority usage for each engineer that assigns a priority to a work order.

3. (Original) The system recited in claim 1, wherein the user can use the graphical user interface to request a report containing at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system.

4. (Original) The system recited in claim 1, wherein the graphical user interface includes a SCHEDULE window which a user can use to enter a search to extract at least a portion of the work order information stored in the database management system.

5. (Original) The system recited in claim 1, wherein the graphical user interface is a web browser.

6. (Original) The system recited in claim 1, wherein the work-order information is updated periodically.

7. (Original) The system recited in claim 6, wherein the work-order information is updated once a day.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for managing work order scheduling using priorities, comprising:

entering a work-order;

storing work-order information related to the work order;

assigning a time estimate to each work order entered, the time estimate corresponding to the time estimated to be required to complete the work order;

assigning a priority to at least one of the plurality of entered work orders;

allocating each engineer a pre-determined number of priorities for a pre-determined number of priority levels;

tracking a remaining number of priorities at each priority level for each engineer, and when the remaining number of priorities for a particular priority level is zero, then not permitting an engineer to assign another work order to that particular priority level;

querying to determine whether another engineer may loan a priority, such that when the engineer has no remaining priorities in that particular priority level, then permitting the engineer to negotiate with the other engineers to borrow a priority in that particular priority level; and

providing a graphical user in which a user can update at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system.

9. (Original) The method recited in claim 8, comprising the step of tracking priority usage for each engineer that assigns a priority to a work order.

10. (Original) The method recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of requesting a report containing at least a portion of the work-order information stored in the database management system via the graphical user interface.

11. (Original) The method recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of extracting at least a portion of the work-order information using a SCHEDULE window of the graphical user interface.

12. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of periodically updating the work-order information.

13. (Original) The method recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of updating the work-order information once a day.

14. (Currently Amended) A system for priority-based work order scheduling, comprising:

a work order entry computer to input a work order, the work order entry computer determining a time estimate of the time required to complete the work order;

a database management system to store work order data corresponding to the work order and corresponding time estimate;

a user computer executing a graphical user interface by which a user can assign a priority to the work order data, the user computer determining that the user has sufficient priority available to make the priority assignment, wherein the user computer allocates a predetermined number of priorities for a predetermined number of priority levels to the user, and the user computer tracks the user's priority assignments, the user computer tracking a remaining number of priorities at each priority level for each engineer, and when the remaining number of priorities for a particular priority level is zero, then the user computer will not permit an engineer to assign another work order to that particular priority level, the user computer permitting the engineer to borrow priorities from other engineers, wherein when the engineer has no remaining priorities in that particular priority level, then the user computer permits the engineer to negotiate with the other engineers to borrow a priority in that particular priority level, the user computer querying to determine whether another engineer may loan a priority.

15. (Original) The system recited in claim 14, wherein the graphical user interface provides a display by which the user can query the database management system to extract a portion of the work order data in a report.

16. (Original) The system recited in claim 14, wherein the user computer decrements the number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the user makes the priority assignment, and increments number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the work order is completed.

17. (Original) The system recited in claim 15, wherein the report is a priority report showing the user's use of priorities.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for priority-based work order scheduling, comprising the steps of:

entering a work order;

determining a time estimate of the time required to complete the work order;

storing work order data corresponding to the work order and corresponding time estimate;

assigning a priority to the work order data;

allocating a predetermined number of priorities for a predetermined number of priority levels to the user; ~~and~~

determining whether there is sufficient priority available to make the priority assignment;

when a remaining number of priorities for a particular priority level is zero, then not permitting the user to assign another work order to that particular priority level; and

querying to determine whether another user may loan a priority, such that when the user has no remaining priorities in that particular priority level, then permitting the user to negotiate with the another user to borrow a priority in that particular priority level.

19. (Original) The method recited in claim 18, further comprising the step of querying the database management system to extract a portion of the work order data in a report.

20. (Original) The method recited in claim 18, further comprising the step of tracking the user's priority assignments.

21. (Original) The method recited in claim 20, further comprising the steps of:

decrementing the number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the user makes the priority assignment; and

incrementing number of priorities corresponding to the level of the priority that the user assigns to the work order data when the work order is completed.

22. (Original) The system recited in claim 19, further comprising the step of generating a report showing the user's use of priorities.

23. (Currently Amended) A system for priority-based scheduling of telephone company work orders, comprising:

means for entering a work order;

means for estimating a time to complete the work order;

means for storing work order data associated with the work order and time estimate to complete the work order;

means for associating a priority with the work order, and storing the associated priority with the work order data;

means for allocating a pre-determined number of priorities for a pre-determined number of priority levels;

means for determining when a remaining number of priorities for a particular priority level is zero, and then not permitting assignment of another work order to that particular priority level; and

means for querying to determine whether a priority may be loaned, such that when the particular priority level has no remaining priorities, then negotiation is permitted to borrow a priority in that particular priority level.

24. (Original) The system recited in claim 23, further comprising means for tracking the time remaining to complete the work order on a continuing basis.

25. (Original) The system recited in claim 24, wherein the means for tracking comprises means for periodically updating the work order data.

26. (Cancel)

27. (Previously Presented) The system recited in claim 23, further comprising means for tracking the allocation to determine if a particular priority can be assigned.

28. (Original) The system recited in claim 23, further comprising:

means for determining a series of tasks required to complete the work order;

means for assigning a time required to complete each task; and

means for summing the time required to complete each task to estimate the time required to complete the work order.